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Special Issue -Professional Doctorate Curriculum, Pedagogy and Achievements.

Editorial

Guest Editors:

Pauline Armsby and Carol Costley, Middlesex University

The contributors to this special issue have undertaken research on professional doctorates that puts an emphasis on practice and practitioner research and how this can provide for and impact upon workplaces, professions, societies and the candidates themselves. They are all experienced academics in the field of professional doctorate (PD) learning providing individual examples of their researched practice and drawing on international literature and evidence.

Internationally, there has been more focus on practice in a range of different doctorate pathways not only in PDs (Kot and Hendel, 2012). Doctorates in general have experienced a 'practice turn' (D'Ala and Barnacle, 2014), with an increased focus on practice as a concept and as a professional site of inquiry. The numbers of PD programmes available have increased, particularly in the UK, Australia and the U.S. and there has also been a wealth of publications that demonstrate the importance of practice (Lester, 2012) and the need to turn more towards researching principles of practice (Hawkes and Yerrabati, 2018). The papers in this edition contribute to the development of these principles. These principles of practice can then continue to be developed for PDs that can stand as an appropriate and relevant qualifications for enabling candidates to develop their research skills and particularly for advancing their profession and their professional practice (Costley and Lester, 2012, Burnard et al, 2018).

The purpose of doctoral education has come under scrutiny in many countries (Costley, 2013): governments are asking that it contributes to improving economic and social development (Strengers, 2014); universities that have traditionally spearheaded the pursuit of disciplinary knowledge now also need to balance this with the provision of attractive, sustainable educational opportunities; and candidates are increasingly conceptualising themselves as participants engaging in a life-enhancing experience, rather than purely as student learners (Salter, 2013). Previous research has demonstrated that there are different ways in which doctorates for professionals can have an impact on those who complete them, on their professional context, and how the knowledge generation it enables can be harnessed for national and international economic, and socially sustainable developments (Strengers, 2014, Winch, 2015). This makes exploring the effects of participation an important concern for those involved in PDs. Other matters such as the employment prospects of doctoral graduates have also fuelled research and consideration of the purposes of doctorates internationally (Wellington, 2013; Poole, 2015).

Research outputs and conferences that focus on professional and practice-based doctorates have become more evident over the last 20 years. An international biennial conference series held in Australia from 1996 to 2004 accelerated the debate; each of which produced a

set of papers, many of which were developed as contributions to higher education journals. Then in 2009 the UK Council for Graduate Education and Middlesex University in the UK started an international PD conference series which has had six meetings. Many of the papers in this issue started as ideas brought to the Council for Graduate Education conference series. These also spearheaded an International Association of Practice Doctorates (IAPD). The association has an international membership and works to support academics and practitioners involved in practice based doctorate programmes, to consider policy issues, provide a source of information and to widen the debate about professional and practice-based doctorates www.professionaldorates.org

Contributions to the Special Edition -Curriculum, Pedagogy and Achievements

The papers in this special edition consider three major themes: curriculum, pedagogy and achievements. The first two themes represent the overwhelming areas of interest reported in the literature on PDs, while achievements although featured has been less prevalent (Hawkes and Yerrabati, 2018). The three themes are explored through the lens of the candidate and graduate experiences, outcomes and impacts. As the perception of doctoral education had been changing to a greater focus on candidates' actual professional practices, the authors of these papers many of whom are also curriculum designers recognise the utility of graduate feedback and success for developing their programmes (Armsby et al 2018).

In the area of curriculum, analysis of how universities can work with professional groups such as educators or social workers or engineers and come to agreement about what the core features of their practice are, is important. Also, the influence of other stakeholders such as professional bodies on what comprises doctoral level study for practicing professionals needs consideration, and in some cases requires close cooperation. Curricula that contribute to personal, professional, or social impact are also common. This has significant relevance now as doctoral education is under review, particularly in relation to work related issues e.g. the employability of doctorate graduates and connecting doctoral research with impact for social good (East et al, 2014).

The first paper by Eubank and Forshaw explores PD curricula through the lens of practitioner psychology in the UK, which is currently one of the only professional areas to incorporate professional accreditation with a PD. The authors explore the challenges of this wide-ranging and multi-regulatory territory that requires curricula that meet a professional body's standards through provision of opportunities to develop practice competences, and the research focus that is widely accepted in the UK as distinctive of doctoral study (QAA, 2015). The place and type of research and practice in PDs is an ongoing consideration for curriculum developers and use of different terminology may better define the purpose of PDs. The term 'researching professional', has been coined as more appropriate than the vaunted 'professional researcher' that may be argued to be more suitable for those intending to become academics or researchers. Whereas 'practitioner-researcher' is suggested by Eubank and Forshaw as the most appropriate term which they argue offers a different specification from PhDs and traditional PDs.

PDs are developed for different purposes in relation to practise. Many act as an opportunity for extension of practice, but in this case it embodies both a preparation for and a license to practice. Both can use the practitioner-researcher approach but the focus of enquiry may differ with the former candidates researching and developing their existing practice and the latter developing and researching their emerging practice. The focus on practices in PDs suggests that the development of the practitioner e.g. high-level reflective skills is important, and balancing this with undertaking research that extends the boundaries of knowledge is a key concern. The authors note that supervision of this kind of doctorate requires experience in applied practice and expertise in research. This is likely to be true of most PDs, however, in this case the applied practice will be codified by a professional body and therefore requires supervisors to have that level of detailed knowledge. Eubank and Forshaw recommend that there is much to be gained by universities and professional bodies collaborating to develop curricula.

Hall's paper makes a thought-provoking contrast to the first paper as it takes an in-depth focus on curriculum design through exploration of a single programme case example of a doctorate in law—the DLaw. Interestingly, the candidates are academics in the university's own law department who have previously been legal practitioners but now require a doctoral qualification to support their academic career. Using experiential data, which is also often a cornerstone of professional learning, the paper reviews the PD programme's development through curriculum designer and candidate dialogue. While some have voiced concerns around undertaking a doctorate in one's own university, this work has utilised the relationship to explore the PD learning process.

Notions such as doctorateness, threshold concepts and constructive alignment are considered alongside programme delivery, and responses to the difficulties encountered such as setting appropriate assessment points in a constructivist, learner-led programme are discussed. Hall's contribution illustrates the complex theoretical thinking that underpinned the curriculum design and evaluation for the practitioners in her programme: a curriculum designed to promote a 'research culture in which innovation, creativity and divergence are privileged'. Notwithstanding the need to identify quality and assess doctorateness, the paper concludes that the process involved in developing a practitioner to doctorate level requires candidates 'to spend a good deal more time in the liminal space'. While it can be argued that all doctorates offer up this uncomfortable space, the first two papers in this special edition focused on curriculum issues illustrate that the additional practitioner element provides a further level of complexity.

In terms of the second theme of pedagogy, the research undertaken for these papers reviewed what constitutes an appropriate approach for supporting professional development considering the focus of candidates' study is often situated in work practices and can therefore be remote to the university setting, and thus how feedback provided by a university supervisor can connect with a practice-oriented research issue. With candidates based overseas, online pedagogy is also of particular interest for all types of doctorate, and the importance of developing research capacity through supervision has continued to be noted as needing attention (Roumell, and Bollinger, 2017).

Gray and Crosta's paper reports on a systematic literature review that aimed 'to improve thesis support and supervision provided to international students undertaking an online doctorate in Higher Education'. PDs offered online to international and remote candidates are not uncommon, so the lessons learned from this work may be relevant to anyone developing an online pedagogy for supervision. A range of supervision issues are discussed, for example, 'belongingness', or the effective relationship between supervisor and supervisee. Without a physical presence it is argued that ways to develop belongingness need to be nurtured through virtual meetings that help build a healthy supervisory relationship. Synchronous technology with effective use of other digital technologies are suggested as key requirements. Further research that reviews what may be required for different forms of doctorate is required. Do those focusing on professional learning and research or who are already experienced professionals need a different kind of online supervision than those focusing on more theoretically oriented, non-professional related knowledge? The views expressed by curriculum designers in the first two papers suggest that doctorates for professional may require additional practitioner-oriented knowledge and skill to be incorporated in the supervision process.

Adams and Cripps' paper on the experience of feedback on a PD again provides a contrast in focus to the previous paper on the theme of pedagogy. This qualitative investigation looks in-depth at a single case of a recent graduate of an EdD programme, and her particular experience of feedback. The narrative study conveys the candidate's experience through a number of verbatim quotes. Feedback is defined by the candidate as 'a kind of flowing conversation', which illustrates a dialogue between self and others including supervisors and peers. While this dialogic approach advanced the research, it was also noted to develop the candidate's identity, suggesting the conversation was also taking place within the candidate to make sense of their experience. This reflective analysis on who one is and who is one becoming within a professional context and alongside a research endeavour can provide a springboard for positive action. The final set of papers explore what kinds of impacts can be made through PDs.

This theme explores the experiences, outcomes and achievements of candidates on a range of levels. It connects well with the wider debates about the purpose of doctoral education because for PDs in particular there is usually an expectation that the research is intended to form a rationale for change in a practice setting. For example, in relation to PDs:

"Complex change-oriented issues...approached with a researching and critically reflective orientation can be a powerful source, not only of contextual insights but of academically and professionally-valid knowledge, giving rise to new concepts, models, theories and critiques as well as different ways of doing things."

Lester 2012

The kinds of impact included in this issue are: the personal, that is the perceived and actual development of practitioner knowledge, skill, ability and identity amongst candidates as it relates to purpose of the programme offered and its recognition; the work-place impact in terms of improvements to outcomes and practices; and the social impact, for example on

professional culture. Significant impacts are difficult to substantiate however examples suggestive of impact can be helpful in exploring the kinds of impact that can be made by professional doctorate candidates. The following link shows examples of impact from a variety of universities: <http://www.ukcge.ac.uk/events/icpd-Dmpact-posters.aspx> The movements towards developing doctoral outcomes that make an impact has more recently been a subject of debate. As doctoral candidates engage with their studies, through gaining research experience they may achieve developmental impacts that can contribute to the public good, and develop themselves through new confidence and prestige and impact on colleagues and associates. These are small and increasing capacities to make change in professional settings.

One of the features of professional and practice-based doctorates is that there is likely to be an outcome that will make a tangible impact in a given area. The McSherry, Saltikov. Walsh, Walker, Cummings and Ford paper asks for attention to be paid to the challenging and complex nature of impacts and outcomes that are an expectation of many PD programmes. The writers have taken data from international colleagues who run PDs and find that measuring the impact and outcome of them is invariably a difficult and problematic task. Similarly having the goal of specific outputs and the intention of making a societal or economic impact is not easy to plan as part of a doctorate initiative. Moreover, the meanings of these terms can be ambiguous and there is an interchangeability of the terms. Impact and outcome measures may now constitute evidence for quality assurance for academic reviewers, employers, professional regulators/commissioners and other stakeholders. This is because PDs are often described as making an original and significant difference to practice and so for doctorate outcomes especially in those areas that claim to serve professional areas, it is becoming essential to have clear and effective definitions and guidance. It is recommended that the terms 'outcome' and 'impact' are defined and this paper produces data that helps provide some of that definition. There is a long way to go in defining impacts through practitioner research but this is a significant area of development in distinguishing some key purposes of professional and practice-based doctorates.

Maxwell's paper demonstrates how doctorate learning can make a positive difference to a developing country. Doctoral scholarships gave Bhutanese students the opportunity to develop themselves as researchers and teachers thus enhancing their personal capacity. The nature of their Doctoral research enabled many to influence the education sector that in turn increased capacity in that sector, especially in the Royal University of Bhutan. Others developed leadership roles, some at national level. Maxwell's research was timely as it came at a time when Bhutan was explicitly seeking to become an active member of the so called 'knowledge economy' and to continue to improve the education system.

Finally, Hager, Turner, Little and Dellande begin by demonstrating that the Doctor of Business Administration (DBA) is focussed on generating practice-based knowledge for the academy, practitioners and organisations outside the academy. They cite different ways of conducting the doctoral research pathway to prepare for career goals additional to the research-emphasis of PhDs. DBA graduates like many other PDs prepare candidates to

engage in strategic or managerial scholarship within a variety of settings that may be appropriate for operational purposes outside or within higher education. The detailed study of individuals indicates that there are varied developmental networks that provided them with differing levels of and challenges to psychosocial support from family, peers, colleagues and faculty. Analysis reveals how these sources of support contribute to professional doctoral candidates' psychosocial development. The authors conclude that DBA courses can support candidates more by providing and encouraging engagement with networking within their professional communities, garnering support from those who may be interested parties and generally being more aware of this aspect of candidates' development during their studies. Such support leads to professional outcomes that link scholarly engagement within the practice setting in which they work especially in leadership and relevant scholarly outputs.

The future of doctorates for professionals

The papers in this special edition range in focus from, for example the wider view provided by literature review to in-depth case studies of the experiences of individual PD candidates. These contributions provide the foundations for taking forward further research on the curriculum, pedagogy and impact of practitioner doctorates. Discussion on doctorateness, including the similarities and differences between PhDs and PDs will continue, and while there are usually nominally identical quality standards internationally, there are often different purposes that mean the curriculum, pedagogy and achievements have a different focus. Some PhDs also often focus explicitly on practice issues such as in the Industrial PhD and PhDs associated with more practice oriented subjects, for example arts and engineering.

Practitioner Doctorates can lead to greater professional capability and therefore possible national socio-economic advantages. The changing role of higher education and its internationalisation may affect the ways in which PDs are understood in universities in particular the way research knowledge is engaged in the curriculum and facilitated in terms of both academic and workplace practices.

The generation of new knowledge is understood as central to the outcome of a doctorate. For PDs this is often where the doctorate can directly solve problems and improve quality of life. The complexity involved in making knowledge work for the societal good is already embodied in areas of study such as engineering, management and medicine but there is a more recent drive to explore the specific impact of a wider range of practitioner-led research. These papers demonstrate that knowledge alone is not adequate without pathways to utilise it effectively. Practitioner doctorates are beginning to excel in the exploration and understanding of the effective implementation of knowledge, addressing societies' problems and developing creative possibilities from a variety of research and practice perspectives. Research on the curriculum and pedagogy that support the highly motivated candidates that undertake practitioner doctorates is likely to progress such achievements.

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